

DCFS Weekly Update From the State Office

Friday, February 9, 2001

SAFE and Practice Model: Requests for Help Make a Difference

By Richard Anderson

We know that there will be changes needed in our systems to support the practice model implementation. For example, policy, SAFE, and administrative processes will all need to adapt to the changes. This brief note is relating to SAFE. Nancy Sloper, supervisor in the Northern Region, recently alerted us to a problem they were having with the need for flexibility in changing, adding, or deleting items in the service plan to meet practice model flexing to unique needs and changes. This had a great outcome. Bob Lewis from SAFE was able to coach the unit on how to use SAFE so that they now have a way to make it work for service planning. I felt that this might encourage us all to make sure the concerns are brought to SAFE experts that can help us. Here is Nancy's testimonial:

"Several weeks ago I was involved in a meeting with the other in-home Northern Region supervisors. During that meeting we discussed service plans in relation to practice model and how our workers can keep a plan flowing as the case progresses. It was our understanding that there was no way for our workers to go back into a plan that was over 30 days old and add objectives or change current objectives. We were concerned that this was a burden on our workers. I wrote to Richard Anderson and asked for his help on this. No sooner had I written to Richard than I heard from Bob Lewis with suggestions on how to update a service plan without rewriting the whole thing. Several of the workers on my team have tried his suggestion and say that it works for them. Bob has been very responsive with suggestions to make this work. I appreciate the quick responses I have received from him and the problem solving he was able to help me with. Thanks Bob."

Please let us know the specifics of barriers you are encountering so we can apply whatever is needed to remove the barrier. Nancy's situation is one that lent itself to a quick remedy.

Legislative Update

By Linda Wininger

Here is the latest on the Legislative Front. We had a few surprises this week so it should be worthwhile reading.

SB 33, Mental Health Services for Foster and Adopted Children Task Force—This bill is in the House Rules Committee. It has been sent to the Legislative Fiscal Analyst for a revised fiscal note.

1SSB 64, Adoption Law Amendments—This bill passed the Senate and was sent to the House. It has been sent to the House Judiciary Committee and will probably be on their agenda sometime next week.

SB 71, Tax Credits for Special Needs Adoption—This bill was on the agenda of the Senate Revenue and Taxation Committee but was not heard. This usually happens when the committee runs out of time. It will likely be on the agenda first thing next time the committee meets.

SB 91, Child Firearm Access Prevention—This bill remained in the Senate Rules Committee and has still not been assigned a standing committee.

1SSB 97, Special Needs Adoption—This bill remains circled on the Senate third reading calendar.

SB 111, Conflict of Interest Investigation into Allegations of Child Abuse and Neglect—This bill has passed both the Senate and the House and will now be enrolled and sent to the Governor.

SB 117, Guardian ad Litem Amendments—This bill was sent to the Senate State and Local Affairs Committee Standing Committee and should be on their agenda next week.

SB 119, Child Welfare Amendments—This bill was amended in the Senate Human Services Committee. Nothing drastic. It is now on the Senate second reading calendar.

SB 136, Parenting Plan for Divorcing Parents—This bill was also amended in committee and then passed out with a favorable recommendation. It will be on the Senate second reading calendar.

SB 153, Kinship Placement for Foster Children—This bill was just sent to the Senate Judiciary Committee and should be on their agenda next week.

SB 165, Non-custodial Visitation—Sent to the House Judiciary Committee. We should see it on their agenda next week.

HB 12, Provision for the Legal Relinquishment of Newborns—This bill was amended in Committee and then passed out favorably. The changes were minor. It passed the House second reading calendar and is now on the House third reading calendar.

HB 31, Child Welfare Oversight Panel Amendments—This bill is done. It is in the enrolling process and will soon be just waiting for the Governor's signature.

HB 33, Clarification of Time Limits for Reunification Services—This bill is through and has been sent to the Governor for his signature.

HB 64, Tuition Waivers for Wards of the State—The Senate has tabled this bill on the third reading calendar. I believe that the Senate is tabling all bills with a fiscal impact over a certain amount so they can then prioritize them.

HB 83, Child Welfare Amendments—BIG CHANGES HERE!!! This bill was substituted in the Senate Human Services Committee by Senator Poulton. The substitute bill adds language that would make a Child Protection worker civilly and personally liable. It is a scary bill and could cause significant changes to our practice. It specifically targets DCFS workers who provide child protection and those associated with substitute care. This bill was passed out of this committee without the opportunity for public comment. Since it has already been through the House there will be only floor debate on the Senate floor and then any debate on the House floor when it comes back for their concurrence. The Senate has sent it back to the Legislative Fiscal Analyst for revised fiscal notes. DCFS will be attaching a large fiscal note to include the cost of hiring and training new workers as we would expect our turnover rate to double should this bill pass. We understand that the office of Risk Management will likely attach a fiscal note for malpractice insurance for workers. We also expect UPEA to attach the same type of fiscal note to this bill that they did to HB 65 from the 2000 session. This bill looks like a resurrection of that bill.

HB 117, Amending the Grounds for taking a Child into Protective Custody—This bill was circled on the House third reading calendar, which puts it on hold until the sponsor uncircles it.

HB 147, Modification of Termination of Parental Rights—There is still NO TEXT for this bill.

HB 148, Child Welfare Alternative Dispute Resolution—This bill is on the House Judiciary Committee agenda for February 12 at 8:00 a.m. in room 223.

1SHB 170, Prescribing Psychiatric Drugs or Medication—This bill was substituted in the House Health and Human Services Committee on Friday. It is now changing code in 62A-4a-116, which is a part of DCFS code that talks about substantiations. It requires the worker to notify the parent that they have a right to a second opinion before they are substantiated for medical neglect for not giving their child prescribed psychiatric medications.

HB 188, Juvenile Courts—Rights of the Parties—This bill is in the Senate Rules Committee and will be assigned to a standing committee.

HB 219, Task Force on Family Conflict Resolution—This bill is on the Senate Human Services Committee agenda for February 12 at 9:30 a.m. in room 416.

HB 224, Notice and Reasonable Efforts for Children in Custody on Grounds Other than Abuse or Neglect—This bill is on the Senate second reading calendar.

HB 225, Foster Parent Child Protective Service Investigation Amendments—This bill was read for the third time in the House. It would normally now be sent on to the Senate at this time; however, it is identical to SB 111 which just passed the House and is now beginning the enrollment process. It is possible that this bill will go no further. We will know next week.

HB 232, Certified Child Welfare Social Service Worker—This bill has been circled on the Senate second reading calendar.

HB 257, Mandatory Child Protection Service Requirements—This bill is on the Senate Human Services Committee agenda for Monday, February 12 at 9:30 a.m. in room 416.

HB 269, Amendments to Concurrent Jurisdiction in Adoption Cases—This bill is on the House Judiciary Committee agenda for February 12 at 8:00 a.m. in room 223.

HB 285, Parental Rights in Juvenile Court—NO TEXT.

HB 309, Educational Neglect Amendments—This bill now has text. It makes specific guidelines for parents, educators, and prosecutors as well as listing exemptions. It also clarifies the provision concerning parent response in truancy situations. This bill is in the House Rules Committee to be assigned to a House standing committee.

HB 387, Narrowing Grounds for Removal of a Child from the Home—This bill is the “spanking bill.” It was amended in the House Health and Human Services Committee this morning to include the threat of harm. It now gives a definition of spanking that can be classified as abusive.

I think that’s it though I could be missing a few or not including some that you may be interested in. I would encourage you to look at the Legislative page on the Internet and follow other bills that you may be interested in. You can also call or write to any of the legislators as long as you do it on your own time and not from your office or through your state e-mail. You can get information about contacting your legislator or other legislators on the legislative web site at www.le.state.ut.us. There is a bar at the top of that web page with several buttons. One allows you to find your legislators and two others (“Senate” and “House”) will give you rosters of each group that have phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and mailing addresses. Any of these methods of communication can be effective. You can also call the House phone at 801-538-1029 and leave a message for a Representative to call you back. You can also call that number and ask to be transferred to the Senate so that you can leave a message for a Senator. Remember, these people are ELECTED officials and they do listen to their constituents but if you don’t connect with them they will not know what their constituents think about the issues.

We have passed the halfway point in the session and have only two and a half weeks to go. I’ll be back next week with more!

Thoughts on Child Welfare Practice

By Richard Anderson

We need, sometimes, to take a look at why human services professions have been selected to do child welfare work. It may be that this evolved because the objective is to prevent abuse, prevent its recurrence, and assist those who are unable to provide safety, permanence, and well-being for their children through intervening for positive change. Sometimes the intervention may be made by getting concrete services to a family, and, at other times, it is working with a parent on their beliefs and actions in

caring for their child. There is no question that we are expected to both protect and to be facilitators of change. However, it often seems there are forces that want to move child welfare to a strictly protection emphasis with little regard for facilitating positive change in families. Other forces appear to want to facilitate positive change in families at the expense of protection. The true professional in child welfare knows that both are absolutely necessary and that any system that does not attend to both will not be effective for a healthy society in either the short or long term. I believe that all of you who read this update know this, and may find yourself leaning one way or another, depending on the child or family. The problem is the constant pressure on the child welfare system to be one or the other, which has the consequence of slowing growth in disciplined practice. What is needed is a consistent path of proven practices; not an individual's or group's desired philosophy. We are in the process of designing and implementing such a system at this moment. The way we present our practice will be as important as the practice itself. I write this article to help provide some small foundation on how we, as child welfare professionals, can help manage our small boats in this troubled sea on which we find ourselves.

Here is a concept that can be applied when we are blown by the winds of adversity and change. This concept comes from one of my favorite writers, John Heider. Heider is known for his accurate interpretations of oriental writing and thought into English. Heider writes (and I have bolded some concepts), "To act effectively, be aware and unbiased. If you are aware, you will know what is happening; you will not act rashly. If you are unbiased, you can act in a balanced and centered manner."

He goes on to say, "Have respect for every person and every issue directed at you. Do not dismiss any encounter as insignificant. But neither should you become anxious nor afraid of being overwhelmed or embarrassed. **If you are attacked or criticized, react in a way that will shed light on the event.** This is a matter of being centered and of knowing that an encounter is a dance and not a threat to your ego or existence. Tell the truth."

Let's have continued, open, and professional dialogue, as we hold on our course that is defining the discipline of child welfare. Let's stay open and aware of what we need to do to be ready for any family and any child that we may encounter, and let's do the same for and with each other, and also with our community partners. Please accept this as a sincere offer to work together to help develop a work atmosphere in the division that provides respect, support, and growth.

P.S. I just wanted to let you know that I only had one response to my offer of a free lunch to any employee who hadn't heard about the practice model—and that person said he'd heard, but offered to take me to lunch to hear more! I'll have to do this more often!

To Make Your Life Easier...Using SAFE Optimally

By Robert Lewis

Effective SAFE Utilization in a DCFS Office

Check out your office. See how effectively it has implemented SAFE. To answer 'Yes' or score 90% or above on all of the questions below, means superb use of SAFE. You are heroes to us all.

1. Are the right people assigned and procedures in place to make sure that clean, unduplicated person records exist in new CPS cases?
2. Are CPS child removals being recorded in SAFE, within two working days of removal, including removal/custody details, health, psychosocial, and education information from the CPS23, Placements, Purchase service authorizations for paid placements?
3. Are SCF cases being created in SAFE within five working days of the Shelter (72-hour) Hearings granting Temporary Custody to DCFS?
4. With the exception of court-ordered custody cases that lack a CPS removal, are SCF cases being created from the prior CPS cases in which the removal occurred rather than being created from scratch?
5. Where prior cases exist, are new in-home cases being created from prior cases rather than being created from scratch?
6. Are new in-home and out-of-home cases being created in a timely manner (that is, that case start date entries are within five working days of case start dates)?
7. Are changes in SCF child placements being entered (and finalized) in SAFE within five working days of the placement change?
8. Are in-home and out-of-home cases being closed in SAFE within 10 working days of direct service/custody termination?
9. Are CPS closures entered in SAFE by the case closure due dates (30 days from referral or the extension date)?
10. Are procedures in place to close SCF cases immediately after custody is terminated, then to enter the Custody Release Order Received Date later when the copy of the order is received?
11. Are standard procedures in place to allow Primary Workers the **option** to use SAFE themselves, in order to:
 - a. Create follow-up cases from cases they are carrying;
 - b. Perform the set-up wizard for SCF and in-home cases;
 - c. Enter/change non-residential placements and PSAs (except for high cost) on their own cases;
 - d. Write Case Plans and Progress Summaries;

- e. Make secondary worker and inter-office transfer worker assignments for their own cases;
 - f. Close their own cases (all types)?
12. Are assignments and procedures in place for a smooth and timely process for entering high cost placements in SAFE, with primary workers or their technicians to set up these placement entries in draft and then contract monitor staff to finalize the placement and PSA records?
 13. Are plans in place to reduce the amount of printing and filing of hard copies of data stored in SAFE, such as CPS file records and documents, and activity records?
 14. Is the Documented Exception procedure for completing action items used sparingly (less than 5% of completions)?
 15. Is the number of 30-day Action Item overdues being minimized (less than 5% of cases with 30-day overdues at any given time)?

Practice Model Questions and Answers

By Midge Delavan

The answers to the questions from last week are as follows:

1. Answer is f. All of the above. Engaging and teaming with families are for use in all work with families.
2. Answer is d. (a and c) Teaming and assessment are important issues for review in a Qualitative Case Review.

New questions:

1. Who facilitates or leads a child and family team meeting?
 - a. The caseworker for the family.
 - b. Family Group Conferencing.
 - c. The supervisor.
 - d. The Attorney General.
 - e. The Mental Health caseworker.
 - f. Depends on the case.
2. Is there a team for a family when the parents' rights have been terminated?

Yes
No